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Applicant (s)

(21) *Patentansökningsnummer* *0300290-4*
Patent application number

(86) *Ingivningsdatum* *2003-02-05*
Date of filing

Stockholm, 2003-11-19

För Patent- och registreringsverket
For the Patent- and Registration Office

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Avgift
Fee *170:-*

Acoustic Meter Assembly

The present invention relates to an acoustic meter assembly of the type according to the preamble to claim 1 and in particular to a holder for an acoustic transducer employed in such a meter.

Acoustic meters, such as flow meters, gas composition meters, etc. are well known in the art. Such meters typically employ one or more ultrasound acoustic transducers arranged within a measurement chamber for receiving a gas or other fluid, the flow, composition, or other property of which is to be measured. The one or more ultrasound transducers operate to transmit an ultrasound signal into and subsequently receive a dependent ultrasound signal from fluid within the measurement chamber and the flow or other property is determined from differences between the transmitted and the received ultrasound signals. To accomplish this the ultrasound transducer is typically mounted in a holder having transducer receiving section either connectable to or more usually integrated with an opening in the measurement chamber. A rubber flange is provided which forms a fluid tight seal between the transducer and the receiving section and acoustically isolates the transducer from the walls of the chamber itself. In this manner a front face of the transducer is exposed to fluid within the chamber.

In order to make accurate determinations using an acoustic meter of the above described type it is essential that the acoustic path length within the measurement chamber is known accurately. However, the exposed front face of the transducer is subject to any pressure changes of the fluid within the chamber. During inspiration, for example, a transducer employed in the measurement of inspiration gas may be subject to approximately 100 mbar pressure increase at the front surface. Such an increase exerts a pressure force on the front surface that is likely to cause the transducer to move

with the rubber flange by approximately 12-13 μm and to thereby increase the acoustic path length by around 25 μm . This increase will lead to an error in the determination made using the meter which will increase the shorter the path within the measurement chamber that is traversed by the acoustic energy becomes. Unfortunately, a short acoustic path, typically of 4cm or less, is often desirable since this will reduce the gas volume required as well as making any necessary gas temperature measurements easier.

One known solution is to design a holder for the transducer having a biasing element, such as a spring, in contact with a rear face of the transducer. This spring provides a force on the transducer that is counter the force exerted on it by fluid pressure from within the measurement chamber and so inhibits pressure induced movements of the transducer. Unfortunately, a large bias force often has adverse effects on the operation of the transducer and it becomes extremely difficult to provide a bias force that is sufficiently large to prevent the small (micron) movements of the transducer which effect the accuracy at the small acoustic path lengths.

It is the aim of the present invention to alleviate at least some of the aforementioned problems associated with pressure induced movement of the acoustic transducer.

Accordingly there is provided a holder for an acoustic transducer as described in and characterised by the present Claim 1. By providing a holder in which fluid pressure is communicated between the opposing front and the rear surfaces of the transducer then the movement of the transducer caused by pressurised fluid in the measurement chamber can be reduced, preferably to zero.

Usefully, the holder may be formed with a chamber with which the rear surface of the transducer is in pressure communication and with conduits for transferring pressurised

fluid between this chamber and the measurement chamber. In this manner pressures at the front and the rear surfaces of the transducer may be simply equilibrated.

5 These and other advantages will become apparent from a reading of the following description of exemplary embodiments of a holder according to the present invention, made with reference to the accompanying figure:

10 Fig. 1 shows a schematic representation of a holder located with a measurement chamber of an acoustic meter assembly.

With reference to Fig. 1, A portion of a measurement chamber 2 of an acoustic meter assembly is shown formed with an acoustically reflective surface 4 at least in the region of an opening 6 within an outer wall of the measurement chamber 2. The opening 6 is here formed in permanent connection with an open ended cylindrical transducer receiving section 8 which in the present embodiment extends at right angles from the measurement chamber 2.

An acoustic, typically ultrasound, transducer 10, here illustrated as a single element but may comprise two or more separate acoustic emitters and receivers arranged in one of a number of known measurement configurations, extends into the receiving section 8 and is provided with a deformable, for example rubber, flange 12 that is intended to form a fluid tight seal with an open periphery 14 of the section 8 and helps to locate a front face 16 of the transducer 10 opposite the acoustically reflective surface 4. The front face 16 is thus exposed to fluid within the measurement chamber 2 and when actuated can transmit acoustic energy towards and detect acoustic energy reflected from the surface 4. The section 8 is dimensioned to provide a gap between its inner walls and the outer surface of the transducer 10 through which fluid may flow and is provided with one or more (here one is shown)

through holes 18 which, in use, are located in fluid communication with internal the measurement chamber 2.

5 An end-cap 20 is provided with a mating portion 22 that
extends over the transducer receiving section 8 to cover the
through holes 18 and locates against the section 8 in a fluid
tight connection to form, together with the transducer
receiving section 8, a holder for the transducer 10. The end-
cap 20, when so located against the section 8, is configured
10 to provide a pressurising chamber 24 for receiving and
holding fluid with which a rear surface 26 of the transducer
10 will be in pressure communication, here because of
exposure of the rear surface 26 to fluid within the
pressurising chamber 24. The end-cap 20 is further configured
15 to cooperate with the through holes 18 and the transducer
receiving section 8 to define one or more conduits 30 for the
transfer of fluid between the pressurising chamber 24 and the
measurement chamber 2 depending on pressure differences
between fluid in the two chambers 2;24. In this manner fluid
20 pressure acting on the front 16 and the rear 24 surfaces of
the transducer 10 may be equalised.

In the present embodiment a spring bias 28 is also provided
as part of the holder 8,20 to hold the transducer 10 in a
25 correct operating position against vibrations and knocks. The
bias force on the transducer 10 that is generated by the
spring 28 needs therefore to be much less than would
otherwise be required to counter pressure forces that may be
generated by pressure changes within fluid in the measurement
30 chamber 2 and the spring 28 may even be omitted.

It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that, without departing from the invention as claimed, a pressure transfer arrangement may be realised in a number of non-inventive ways to provide for pressure communication between the measurement chamber 2 and the rear surface 26 of the transducer 10 so that pressure forces on the front 16 and the rear 26 surfaces of the transducer 10 are essentially equalised. For example, a piston or a deformable membrane may be arranged to act on the rear surface of the transducer 26 to transfer pressure forces to the rear of the transducer.

Claims

1. A holder for an acoustic transducer of an acoustic meter assembly having a measurement chamber (2) for receiving a
5 pressurised fluid to be monitored, the holder including a receiving section (8) in which an acoustic transducer (10) is locatable to expose a front surface (16) to fluid pressure within the measurement chamber (2) characterised in that the holder further comprises a pressure transfer
10 arrangement (24,30) adapted for communicating pressure between the measurement chamber (2) and a rear surface (26) of the transducer (10), opposing the front surface (16).
2. A holder as claimed in claim 1 characterised in
15 that the pressure transfer arrangement (24,30) comprises a pressurising chamber (24) with which the rear surface (26) of the transducer (10) is in pressure communication and a number of conduits (30) for transferring pressurised fluid between the pressurising chamber (24) and the measurement
20 chamber (2).
3. A holder as claimed in claim 2 characterised in that there is provided a number of through holes in the transducer receiving section (8) and in that there is
25 provided an end-cap (20) cooperable with the through holes (18) and the transducer receiving section (8) to define the number of conduits (30) and to provide the pressurising chamber (24).

Acoustic Meter Assembly

Abstract

- 5 An acoustic meter assembly comprises a measurement chamber (2) for receiving a pressurised fluid to be monitored; an acoustic transducer (10) for transmitting acoustic energy into and receiving the transmitted energy from the measurement chamber; and a holder for the acoustic transducer including a receiving section (8) in which the acoustic transducer (10) is locatable to expose a front surface (16) to fluid pressure within the measurement chamber (2). The holder further comprises a pressure transfer arrangement (24,30) adapted for communicating pressure between the measurement chamber (2) and a rear surface (26) of the transducer (10), opposing the front surface (16).

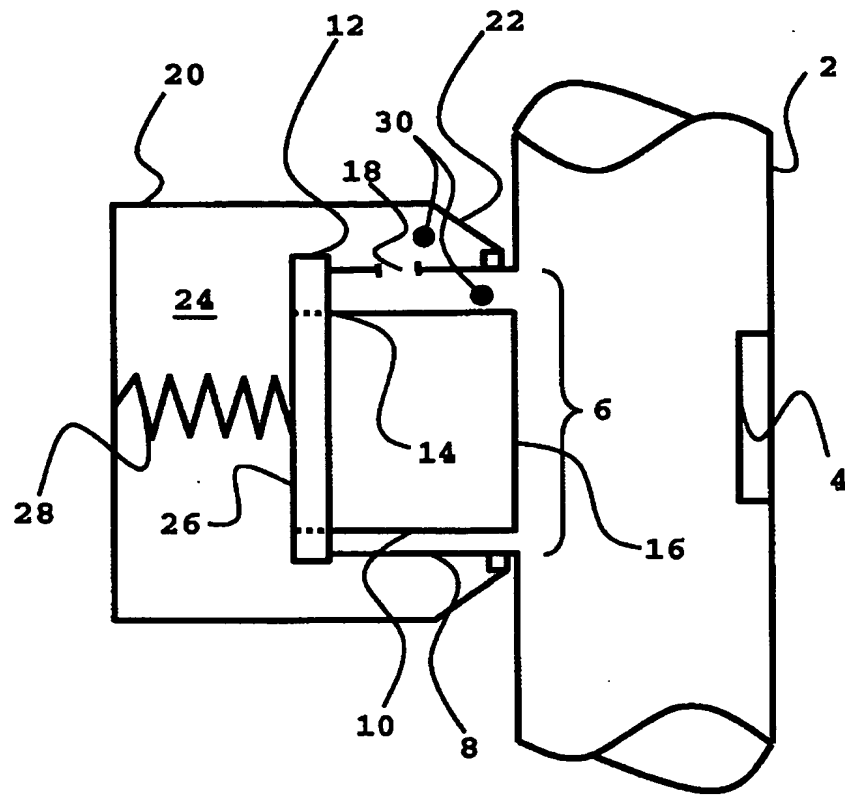


Fig. 1